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ABAC Alumni Association President Chuck Scarborough (far left) and ABAC President David Bridges (far right) congratulate Cici Arriaga and Jacob Vagott during the college’s commencement ceremony.

Arriaga, Vagott Receive Top Awards at ABAC Commencement
TIFTON—Xiomara “Cici” Arriaga of Macon and Jacob Vagott from Centerville were selected for the top awards presented by the Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College Alumni Association during the spring commencement ceremony at ABAC on Thursday.

Arriaga, a rural studies–writing and communication major, was named the winner of the ABAC Alumni Association Award for the top bachelor’s degree graduate participating in the ceremony, and Vagott, an engineering major, received the George P. Donaldson Award for the top associate degree graduate participating in the ceremony.

Arriaga has been a fixture on the campus with her involvement in the ABAC Ambassadors, where she held roles as both vice president and secretary. She has volunteered her time with a number of events at ABAC including Stallion Day, Trunk-A-Treat, the Sunbelt Agricultural Expo, and Dr. Seuss’ National Reading Week. She was also a staff writer for ABAC’s student newspaper, “The Stallion.”

Active in a number of campus clubs, Arriaga participated in the Rural Studies Club, Circle K, and Cultural Latina Club, where she held the office of secretary in 2011-2012 and president in 2012-2013. She was also part of the Stafford Hall residency within the Stafford School of Business from 2013-2016. With a grade point average of 3.50 on a 4.0 scale, she became a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society in 2016.

Arriaga said ABAC has “provided me with the knowledge and experience that I need for the real world. In this institution learning happens in and out of the classroom. ABAC has equipped me both academically and professionally. I believe my time here has shaped me to be an overall better person who will forever be grateful for the opportunities provided by ABAC.”
As a dual-enrolled student in both high school and college, Vagott received his college degree before getting his Northside High School diploma in Warner Robins later this month. He was living on the ABAC campus at 16 years old but quickly adapted to college life.

“My experience at ABAC has been a unique one,” Vagott said. “When I got accepted to ABAC, I had to convince my family that it was best for me to go ahead and go to college, even though I would be the only dual-enrolled student living on campus. Getting accepted into the Honors Program helped tremendously in convincing my family.”

In his two years at ABAC, Vagott has made sure to get the full college experience. Outside of the classroom, he has been a member of the Honors Program, was named Senator for the School of Science and Mathematics for the Student Government Association, and was a member of the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Club.

Vagott also held offices in ABAC campus organizations including service as Vice President of Scholarship for the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, 2015 treasurer and 2016 president of the Residence Hall Association, bowling team captain with the intramural program, and co-head of the Board of Directors for the Inter-Club Council.

Academically, Vagott is an Honors Program graduate who made the Dean’s List three times. He was named a Distinguished Honor Student for the 2015-2016 year and a Superior Honor Student in 2014-2015. He graduated with a GPA of 3.80. Vagott plans to continue his education with the goal of earning a Ph.D. in chemical and biomolecular engineering.

A total of 289 graduates received their diplomas in the Gressette Gymnasium ceremony. Guest speaker Suzette Cofer Alexander was a member of the first graduating class of nurses
from ABAC in 1966. Her address culminated a year-long celebration of 50 years of nursing at ABAC.

Summer term classes begin at ABAC on May 31, and fall semester classes begin Aug. 10.

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